United Nations S/PV.7978

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7978th meeting
Tuesday, 20 June 2017, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr.Llorentty Solíz	(Bolivia (Plurinational State of))
Members:	China	Mr. Zhang Dianbin
	Egypt	Mr. Moustafa
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Lambertini
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Sadykov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Sweden	Mr. Skau
	Ukraine	Mr. Fesko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hickey
	United States of America	Mr. Klein
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli

Agenda

The situation in Burundi

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. *Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

17-17647 (E)

Accessible document Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Burundi

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Burundi to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs; and His Excellency Mr. Jürg Lauber, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations, in his capacity as the Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission.

Mr. Lauber will be joining the meeting via video-teleconference from Geneva.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Zerihoun.

Mr. Zerihoun: I am thankful for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on developments in Burundi and the efforts of the United Nations and partners to help resolve the crisis in the country.

As members of the Security Council are aware, on 5 May, the Secretary-General appointed former President of Burkina Faso, Mr. Michel Kafando, as his new Special Envoy to lead and coordinate United Nations political efforts on Burundi, and to provide assistance to the mediation and facilitation led by the East African Community (EAC). Mr. Kafando visited New York from 30 May to 7 June for briefings and introductory meetings and consultations with Member States and the Secretariat. He will travel to the region shortly to meet with Burundian stakeholders, the East African Community Mediator and Facilitator, the African Union and other relevant actors. That engagement in the region will give us a better insight into the status of the political process, the assessment of regional leaders of the situation and on the way forward.

Since the most recent briefing to the Security Council on 9 March (see S/PV.7895), the situation in Burundi has remained volatile. With regard to the political process, after some delays, an EAC Summit of Heads of State and Government was held on 20 May in Dar es Salaam, at which President Museveni of Uganda was elected Chair of the Eastern African Community and the progress report and recommendations presented by EAC Facilitator, former President Mkapa, were approved. In the report, Mr. Mkapa highlighted nine points to, as he put it, clean the polluted political environment to allow for effective preparations for the 2020 elections, including confidence-building measures, inclusivity and political space, the return of refugees and exiled political leaders and the preservation of the Constitution and the Arusha Agreement.

Mr. Mkapa expressed concern over the slow progress in the dialogue and called on all parties to engage in good faith without preconditions. He also expressed concern over the Government's demand to repatriate the EAC-led dialogue to Burundi. Mr. Mkapa urged the leaders of the region to put their full weight behind his facilitation, including by providing appropriate funding for the process. The next round of consultations is scheduled to take place in Arusha in early July. The joint EAC-United Nations-Africa Union working group continues to meet regularly in Arusha, with the participation of a team from the Office of the Special Envoy in Burundi in support of the efforts of the Facilitator.

The security situation in Burundi remains fragile. Recent weeks have seen grenade attacks in the capital and repression and intimidation by security forces and associated groups. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as human rights non-governmental organizations, continues to report targeted arrests, arbitrary detention, torture and ill-treatment of real or perceived opposition members and supporters, as well as extrajudicial killings and forced disappearances.

Reports of incitement to hatred and violence have increased since April, with regular testimonies and video recordings of rallies by the Imbonerakure, the youth wing of the ruling Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces pour la défense de la démocratie (CNDD-FDD). The dissemination of one such video on social media prompted the CNDD-FDD to issue a statement on 5 April condemning the inflammatory lyrics and attributing the events to influences outside the party. On 18 April, the High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a strong statement condemning the hateful rhetoric and incitement to violence.

The Government of Burundi has not resumed its cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner since it was suspended in mid-October 2016. The High Commissioner has been awaiting a response from the Government regarding amendments to a proposal for a new memorandum of understanding. The Commission of Inquiry on the human rights situation in Burundi, established by the Human Rights Council, presented its second oral briefing on 15 June. The three commissioners regretted the lack of access to the country and the lack of cooperation by the Government of Burundi. The Commission of Inquiry has collected more than 470 testimonies of human rights violations allegedly committed in Burundi since 2015. The Commission will present its final report to the Human Rights Council this coming September.

In its final report, issued on 12 May, the Commission Nationale de Dialogue Inter-Burundais (CNDI) stated that the majority in Burundi supported a revision of the Constitution, the lifting of presidential term limits and changes to other provisions of the Arusha Agreement. Subsequently, President Nkurunziza appointed a constitutional review commission, which has yet to be established, with a six-month mandate to submit proposals to amend the Constitution. The CNDI report and the creation of the constitutional review commission were denounced by opposition parties, including the Conseil national pour le respect de l'Accord d'Arusha pour la paix et la réconciliation au Burundi et la restauration de l'état de droit. Civil society leaders in exile also condemned the move, which they consider a potential catalyst for unrest.

It is of great concern that those developments are taking place against the backdrop of widespread restrictions on civil liberties and political freedom. Implementing the proposed changes in the current climate will likely lead to an escalation of the crisis.

Since the Secretariat's previous briefing, the socioeconomic and humanitarian situations have also deteriorated. Three million people in Burundi are in need of humanitarian assistance. Nearly 2.6 million others experience acute food insecurity, with over 700,000 in need of emergency food assistance. Mass displacement continues due to natural hazards, food insecurity and sociopolitical factors. About 209,000 people are internally displaced. The number of Burundian refugees in neighbouring countries exceeds 400,000. Humanitarian actors have scaled up their response, but have yet to reach the capacity required to meet emerging life-saving needs. The Government has eased some restrictions on humanitarian access. The humanitarian community has appealed for $73.7 million to assist a third of the estimated 3 million people in need. The appeal is currently funded at only 35 per cent, and the humanitarian community urgently needs additional financial support.

The International Monetary Fund projects a growth rate of 0 per cent and an inflation rate of more than 12 per cent in 2017. Severe fuel and electricity shortages further disrupt business and social activities and drive up prices. Blackouts, lasting several days at a time, have reportedly caused an uptick in criminal activity in some areas.

The Secretariat remains fully committed to assisting the people of Burundi and supporting the EAC-led dialogue process. Regional actors and international partners need to put their full weight behind the EAC-led dialogue and continue to press for the implementation of confidence-building measures to help create conditions conducive to the holding of an inclusive and credible political dialogue.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Zerihoun for his briefing to the Council.

I now give the floor to Mr. Lauber.

Mr. Lauber: I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council from the perspective of the Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). As usual, my statement has been subject to consultation with, and approval by, the members of the configuration, including the country concerned, Burundi.

Let me start by welcoming the two appointments just mentioned by the Assistant Secretary-General: those of Mr. Michel Kafando as Special Envoy of the Secretary-General and of Mr. Garry Conille as United Nations Resident Coordinator in Burundi. We also acknowledge the rapid accreditation by the Government of Burundi. We furthermore welcome Mr. Kafando's visit to Burundi, scheduled for the end of the month, to make the first contact with the national authorities in Bujumbura. I very much look forward to the cooperation between Mr. Kafando, Mr. Conille and the configuration.

One of the key events that marked the period since the previous Council briefing on Burundi (see S/PV.7895) was, as the Assistant Secretary-General just

mentioned, the East African Community (EAC) Heads of State Summit on 20 May in Dar-es-Salaam. The Summit demonstrated once again the importance of regional engagement. Mr. Yoweri Museveni, President of Uganda, now assumes the chairmanship of the EAC, and he reiterated his personal commitment to the EAC-led Burundi mediation. He also called for a resumption of socioeconomic cooperation with Burundi.

Furthermore, the Summit provided clarity about the direction of the mediation process. Mr. Benjamin Mkapa, EAC Facilitator and former President of Tanzania, presented a proposal on the way forward that outlines a series of steps towards overcoming the current situation and creating the necessary preconditions for peaceful and democratic elections in 2020. The EAC Heads of State welcomed that proposal, and I hear similar positive reactions from Burundi's major socioeconomic partners.

Political dialogue, security and human rights, as well as socioeconomic development, are closely interlinked, and it is important to see progress in all three areas. In the political area, the plan outlined by President Mkapa, and endorsed by the EAC Summit on 20 May, offers a clear pathway towards progress. The inter-Burundian dialogue, led by the Commission nationale de dialogue inter-Burundais, as well as recent initiatives by the Ombudsman, should evolve in synchronization with the EAC-led process. A greater international presence can considerably contribute to improvements in the area of human rights and security. Whereas the Government of Burundi has signalled its readiness to accept a continued presence of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Burundi, the modalities of the cooperation between the Government and OHCHR remain to be agreed. I furthermore hope that the rest of the 200 agreed military and human rights observers of the African Union (AU) can soon be deployed to Burundi and complement those AU observers who are already in the country. The monitoring and reporting of both institutions, in cooperation with the host Government, have the potential to contribute to a further stabilization of the situation.

Besides these two areas, we must not neglect the socioeconomic and humanitarian situation. In recent months, the PBC Burundi configuration focused in particular on socioeconomic development, which was a key aspect in the consultations that I held in Burundi and Tanzania from 27 to 31 March. A written report on the outcome of that visit was submitted to the PBC and the Security Council in April. During the visit, I co-hosted a socioeconomic meeting in Bujumbura together with His Excellency Alain Aimé Nyamitwe, Burundi's Minister of External Relations and International Cooperation, and Mr. Bo Viktor Nylund, the then United Nations Resident Coordinator ad interim.

On the one hand, this working lunch provided for an open exchange on the current socioeconomic and humanitarian challenges and on the ongoing national and international responses in the three priority sectors — food security, health and education — that had been identified during the socioeconomic consultations in Geneva in November 2016. On the other hand, the meeting was an opportunity for the Government and its United Nations partners to jointly reflect on modalities of cooperation.

At the end of that meeting, I agreed with the Foreign Minister and the United Nations Resident Coordinator ad interim to continue the socioeconomic dialogue in the format of a joint retreat to be held with the Government and its main international partners in Bujumbura in July.

On 21 April, I travelled to Washington, D.C., where I met Burundi's Minister of Finance, Budget and Privatization, as well as representatives of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. They updated me on the current socioeconomic situation and all welcomed the idea of organizing a retreat between the Government and key multilateral partners in Bujumbura.

The PBC Burundi configuration has now started to prepare that socioeconomic retreat, which is tentatively scheduled for 11 July. The retreat will allow the Government and its international partners to share updated macroeconomic and socioeconomic data, inform one another about ongoing humanitarian and socioeconomic assistance, and discuss the modalities of cooperation. We hope that the participants will agree on concrete steps to make cooperation more efficient and overcome existing obstacles.

I am glad that Burundi's major bilateral partners, EAC Facilitator President Mkapa and the representatives of the EAC member States, also see value in continuing the socioeconomic dialogue. Of course, and as mentioned before, this dialogue cannot take place in a vacuum. The political dialogue in Arusha and the socioeconomic conversations are complementary. The

socioeconomic track can inform the Arusha process, and vice versa.

The PBC Burundi configuration remains a platform where actors from all three areas — political dialogue, human rights and security, and the socioeconomic situation — can compare notes and exchange information on and assessments of the developments in Burundi as we jointly, together with the Government of Burundi, strive for progress in all three areas. I will gladly inform the Council about the outcome of the planned socioeconomic retreat and the further engagement of the configuration.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Lauber for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to begin by thanking the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, and the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) Burundi configuration, our colleague Ambassador Jürg Lauber, for their respective briefings.

Uruguay reiterates its concern at the current state of affairs in Burundi, which is still picking up the pieces from the 2015 electoral crisis and continues to face a host of further challenges, in particular serious and persistent violations and abuses of human rights, an economic slowdown and the mass displacement of its population.

Uruguay notes with interest the convening of the East African Community summit on 20 May, at which the countries of the region reach reiterated their commitment to finding a peaceful solution to the crisis in Burundi. Moreover, during the summit, the facilitator of the inter-Burundian dialogue, Mr. Benjamin Mkapa, presented a road map containing a series of steps aimed at ending the current stalemate in the political process and promoting the necessary conditions for transparent, inclusive and peaceful elections in 2020.

Uruguay therefore urges the countries in the region to support Burundi in a united and coordinated manner. Similarly, we urge the Burundian parties to resume dialogue in good faith so as to ensure the implementation of the road map proposed by facilitator Mkapa on the basis of respect for the Arusha Agreement.

Given the deteriorating human rights and security situation in the country, Uruguay is concerned that currently, for various reasons, the cooperation between Burundi on the United Nations is at a low ebb. We are particularly concerned by the suspension of cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the further problems encountered in the relationship between the authorities and the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General in the country.

We believe that it is essential to restore mutual trust between the Government of Burundi and the United Nations system, which would make it possible to pool our efforts to ensure the stability and development of the country and the well-being of its people. Here we advocate for fresh engagement between the United Nations and Burundi, which can take the guise of specific actions such as the concluding of an agreement for the renewal of the activities of OHCHR in Burundi.

By the same token, almost one year after the adoption of resolution 2303 (2016), we call upon the Government of Burundi to acquiesce to the deployment of human rights observers and military experts by the African Union as well as to the deployment of the United Nations police component, as provided for in the resolution.

To conclude, we would like to express Uruguay's support to the recently appointed Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, Mr. Michel Kafando, and we wish him every success in his role. We eagerly await the outcome of his visit to Burundi at the end of this month. We also pay tribute to the work of the Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, Ambassador Jürg Lauber, for his unstinting efforts to build peace in Burundi.

We also look forward to the outcome of the socioeconomic retreat that is set to take place next month, which we understand will be a crucial forum for the Government of Burundi and its international partners to discuss various modalities for cooperation.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Burundi.

Mr. Shingiro (Burundi) (*spoke in French*): As this is the first time that I am taking the floor under your presidency, Sir, I should like at the outset to congratulate you personally as well as your country, Bolivia, on your well-deserved accession to the presidency of the

Security Council. You may, of course, count on the full support and cooperation of Burundi throughout your presidency.

I should like to take this opportunity to share with the Council the latest developments in my country at the political, security and human rights levels and the efforts undertaken by the Government to normalize relations with its partners and the United Nations.

As regards the political situation, I should like to recall that, following 26 April 2015, the Government of Burundi began a process of inter-Burundian dialogue, with the facilitation of both the Commission nationale de dialogue inter-Burundais (CNDI) and that of the East African Community (EAC).

On the domestic level, the Inter-Burundi dialogue has made significant progress. On 12 May, the Commission nationale de dialogue inter-Burundais submitted its final report to the appropriate parties. Since its inception, it has spent about 600 hours in listening and exchange sessions with approximately 26,000 Burundian citizens in the 18 provinces and 119 communes of the country. The CNDI also met with organized groups — such as women's groups, youth groups, trade unions, accredited political parties, religious groups, journalists, students, economic actors, police officers, civil society as a whole and so on. In addition, the Commission met with representatives of the East African Community Legislative Assembly, the diplomatic and consular corps, the international organizations present in Burundi and, of course, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the Burundian diaspora living in such Scandinavian countries as Norway, Denmark and Sweden.

At the regional level, the East African Community is working hard to assist Burundians in finding lasting solutions to the political consequences of the 2015 crisis. Those consultations are on the right track despite some pending challenges. The Government of Burundi remains very committed to the process of political dialogue. Recently, consultations at the highest level between Burundi and mediators have been stepped up and will continue to move forward.

Also at the regional level, upon the initiative of the Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, the Permanent Representatives of the countries of the region, together with the Permanent Representative of South Africa, whose country has played an important role in the inter-Burundi peace process, met here in New York for a working lunch on 31 May. At the end of the meeting, consensus was reached on the following items.

First, the people concerned and the region must retain their leadership role in the management of the situation in Burundi. The international community's contribution should be limited to providing assistance. Secondly, the social and economic aspects must continue to receive the attention of Burundi's development partners. Just as the recent EAC Summit did, the Permanent Representatives called for the lifting of the economic sanctions on Burundi that affect vulnerable people. My delegation hopes that this passionate appeal from the region will be heeded. Thirdly, there was also consensus on the fact that the two dialogue processes — the internal and external processes — complement one another; they do not compete. They need to benefit on an equal footing from the attention of our partners, because they constitute the very benchmarks for the road map for peaceful elections in 2020.

The culture of dialogue in Burundi goes beyond those two processes. In recent months, the Burundian Ombudsman has increased the number of meetings among all the parties involved in the peace process, in the form of retreats and what we call political coffeehouses. The next retreat is scheduled for tomorrow — 21 to 23 June. This internal dynamic is supported at the highest level by the Head of State and should be supported by our partners as well.

With respect to security, the shared view is that security in Burundi is good throughout the territory, except in a few isolated cases. The fact that a grenade is thrown once every six months is not a cause for concern about security in Burundi just because we see such occurrences elsewhere. The country as a whole is calm, with citizens and foreigners residing in Burundi calmly going about their business.

There is no longer a political crisis in Burundi in the true sense of the term. Let me explain this to you, Mr. President. A political crisis is the absence of institutions or institutional paralysis or general insecurity in a country. Burundi has none of that today. The democratically elected institutions function normally from top to bottom. Security in the country is real. We are today managing the political and economic consequences of the 2015 crisis through dialogue about those consequences and by mobilizing domestic

resources and winning back the trust of partners so that we can address the economic consequences of the crisis. That is what is at stake.

This return to normal security in the country has been confirmed by several regional and subregional organizations, such as the East African Community, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the African Bar Association and the African Union. Following the return to peace, several regional meetings, including that of the East African Standby Force, in February 2017, the ECA Health Ministers meeting, in March 2017, and the eighth ECA Petroleum Conference and Exhibition, from 7 to 9 June 2017, have been held successfully and peacefully in Bujumbura. This reflects the region's confidence in the Burundi authorities. We are also preparing to host the fifth annual ECA Secretary General's Forum for Private Sector, Civil Society and Other Interest Groups, from 22 to 23 June 2017, and the Summit of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, in October 2017.

In the area of human rights, which I think is the most sensitive topic for everyone, Burundi, like other nations in the world, is continuing to make efforts to promote and ensure the protection of human rights. It is an ongoing battle for everyone, including for the Government of Burundi, which is committed to fighting for the protection of human rights so as to meet the remaining challenges in this area. In order to achieve that end, it would be best not to point fingers, but rather to adopt a cooperative approach. We must definitively foreswear politicization, selectivity, bias and subjectivity in the process of human rights protection. Only international cooperation and a mutually beneficial partnership that respects the foundational pillars of all States, namely, sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence, can contribute to the genuine protection of human rights in Burundi and elsewhere. In that regard, I would like to cite an authority from a State that is a member of the Security Council who said only a few days ago that "if our human rights laws get in the way" of their leaders' ability to ensure their citizens' security, they "will change the law so we can do it" in order to adapt to the current situation. That may be an approach that works for other countries dealing with terrorism and serious crime as well.

It is no longer even an open secret that everything that has happened in Burundi since 2015 is the result of a meticulously conceived plan to destabilize Burundian institutions by known outside elements. One example of this, among many others, is the European Union contract documents assisting the financing and evacuation of the key players — who recently fled — in the 2015 insurgency that led to the failed coup d'état of 13 May 2015. The numerous Council members that do not have a hidden agenda where Burundi is concerned have the right to understand that reality. On top of that, a humanitarian war is being planned behind Burundians' backs, as if the recent successive failures of this type of interference disguised as humanitarian assistance in Africa and elsewhere have not been lessons enough in ending such aggressive behaviour for good.

Basically, every possible strategy has been employed since 2014 to effect regime change in Burundi. The plan to destabilize the country was carried out in several stages, each supported by a plan B in case of failure. It all began with the creation of some confusion in interpreting the Constitution, and thereby flouting the authority of Burundi's constitutional court and the East African Court of Justice, which had validated the legitimacy of the candidacy of Mr. Pierre Nkurunziza, President of the Republic of Burundi. The second phasewas to be a continuation of the experiments in mob-led regime change in black Africa that, as the Council is aware, had just succeeded in Burkina Faso and in some countries of the Maghreb. Thanks to Burundians' unity and patriotism, the mob insurgency failed.

The destabilizing machinery then switched to plan B through its planning and financing of the coup of 13 May. Like the first plan, the coup d'état failed miserably, thanks to the overwhelmingly patriotic majority of the forces of law and order. The third plan was to use both internal and external actors to create death squads, whose mission was to conduct targeted killings in both camps with the goal of dividing Burundians and getting them to retreat back into themselves. After several months of such sinister efforts, the regime-change machinery once again came up against Burundians' unity and decided to move to a fourth stage, still going on today, of a campaign demonizing and slandering Burundi and its elected leaders, this time through the wholesale politicization of the human rights situation in Burundi.

Biased, politically motivated resolutions and reports on the human rights situation in Burundi have been regularly adopted in Geneva at the urging of the same external actors. Commissions of inquiry have been created in their wake and are putting out reports from afar, without ever setting foot in Burundi. As far

as we are concerned, a fact-finding report on the human rights situation produced without evidence gathered on the ground and based solely on the testimony of refugees and information collected from social networks is pure theatre, aimed at achieving the regime change that the same well-known axis desires so much. Besides that, having been a refugee myself, I do not know a single refugee anywhere in the world who speaks well of the politics of his country of origin. That applies all the more when the refugees being interviewed are the same people who have taken part in incursions into Burundi after undergoing military training in a neighbouring country that United Nations experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo have exposed, as the Security Council well knows. So claiming to produce a report on a country's human rights situation based solely on refugee testimony is simply all the more likely to diminish that mandating body's credibility.

I should also point out that the avalanche of biased and politically motivated reports that have emerged since 2015 with the intention of damaging my country only add fuel to the fire and help to destabilize Burundi rather than pacify it. The crisis that some external actors continue to speak of is now more artificial than real, and it is therefore high time that the political and diplomatic harassment that Burundi has endured since 2015 came to an end and gave way to cooperation. To the outside forces that continue to harass the Burundian people directly or by proxy, I say that Burundi's sovereignty, unity and dignity are priceless. Burundi will never give in to unjust pressure from those who want to wrest from it the three values that are the very foundation of our nation. Burundi may be a small country, but it is also a great nation that treasures its sovereignty and dignity.

With regard to cooperation, this time with the United Nations, the Government is working to restore peaceful relations with its development partners in a spirit of mutually beneficial and respectful partnership. It was in that spirit that Burundi gave quick assent to the appointment of Mr. Michel Kafando as the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General and has also just confirmed his first visit to Burundi so that he can meet directly with the national authorities. The Government of Burundi stands ready to cooperate fully with him in full respect for the principles and values enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. In its eagerness to restore the trust that had been lost among some of its partners, Burundi also recently swiftly approved the appointment of the new United Nations Development Programme country representative and Resident Coordinator of United Nations agencies with a view to contributing to its sustainable development efforts.

The process of negotiating a consensus on a new host country agreement that will enable cooperation to be resumed between the Government of Burundi and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights is following the normal course and should be finalized in the near future with the consent of both parties. Keeping the Office's presence in Burundi is therefore a foregone conclusion and should no longer be a major concern. The only thing left to do is to finalize the host country agreement.

Still with its contribution to United Nations activities in mind, Burundi continues to participate actively in peacekeeping operations in other countries, with approximately 6,500 troops on the ground, mainly in Somalia and the Central African Republic. Our participation in peacekeeping around the world is one way we can give back to the international community and the United Nations, which have always supported us at difficult times in our history. And it follows that Burundi also expects its partners to make reciprocal efforts to ensure peace.

In conclusion, I would like to briefly share with the Council the three challenges that Burundi is currently facing.

First, it is clear that the economy is Burundi's greatest challenge. Poverty continues to fuel political instability because politicians manipulate young people who are frustrated by the lack of guarantees for a better future. Burundi, like other countries, is trying to implement the United Nations 2030 Agenda and the African Union's Agenda 2063. Political discussions should not take the place of discussions on economic and social aspects. Everything must be done in parallel with the three pillars of the United Nations, which constitute our foundation. I welcome the new approach of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, which since November 2016 has tended to emphasize socioeconomic recovery.

The second challenge is the return of refugees. The Government of Burundi has undertaken a wide-ranging awareness-raising campaign for refugees to encourage their voluntary return. Local administrations also have a duty to supervise the land and property of those who have left, so as to avoid conflict when they return. As a result of those efforts and renewed peace, I emphasize

that 156,000 refugees, which no non-governmental organization or foreign actor has spoken about and which include some political party leaders, recently returned to their homes. The Head of State has just asked the Ombudsman of Burundi to continue awareness-raising efforts for refugees and non-violent political actors for them to return to their country in preparation for the 2020 elections.

As you know, Mr. President, the repatriation of refugees is an indication of subregional stability. It is recognized that, some of those who fled their country, whether for economic reasons or because of rumours of an impending war, were recruited, trained, supervised and then entered the stillborn ranks of rebel movements against Burundi, in flagrant violation of the 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees and other international laws, as well as the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, of 24 February 2013.

Our third and last challenge is national reconciliation. The need for a successful conclusion to the process of national reconciliation through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is extremely important for us Burundians. The Burundian people must learn about their history before definitively turning the page of their painful past. In that respect, we advocate once again for maintaining support for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which has a major role to play in seeking truth, fixing broken hearts and genuinely rewriting our history, which has always been deliberately falsified.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 3.55 p.m.